

Former Days not Better than these :

A SERMON,

PREACHED IN PETERBOROUGH CATHEDRAL,

ON FEB. 21, 1869,

At the First General Ordination

HELD BY THE LORD BISHOP OF THE DIOCESE.

BY ADAM S. FARRAR, D.D.

PROFESSOR OF DIVINITY AND ECCLESIASTICAL HISTORY  
IN THE UNIVERSITY OF DURHAM ;

EXAMINING CHAPLAIN TO THE BISHOP OF PETERBOROUGH.

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of Cromer, Norfolk }

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# A SERMON,

*&c.*

ECCLES. vii. 10.

“Say not thou, What is the cause that the former days were better than these? for thou dost not inquire wisely concerning this.”

THESE words of the ancient Preacher break in like a note of gladness on the minor key of melancholy in which his composition is set; and convey their encouragement or reproof to pensive and reflective minds in all ages of time.

It may be thought that in our own age, so full of life and movement and civilization and hope, there is little danger of repining at the ways of Divine Providence; little danger of being paralyzed in our sphere of duty by a sense of the inutility of labour and the probability of moral failure. And yet thoughtful men, the more they ponder, and the more they labour in society, are made to feel that the age in which we live is marked by a dissolution of institutions, manners, tastes, belief, which perplexes those who meditate upon it, or who try actively to ameliorate its moral condition. It is proverbial indeed

that men are prone to misunderstand the age in which they live. They see the world in section, not in plan ; they construe it by the imagination, not by the reason. As a great work of architecture must be seen from a distance, that the proportion of its parts may be perceived, so the great works of God's natural providence must be viewed from the distance interposed by time, if we would reduce them to their true historic perspective ; yet, when allowance for this source of imperfection in our judgment has been made, we cannot doubt, guided by historical analogy, that our age is one wherein future generations will have to seek for the rise of those causes by which their life, intellectual, moral, and social, will be found to have been moulded. If we apprehend the fact that the influences which permanently impress society are not mainly physical but mental ; not race nor climate, but knowledge, law, social principles, æsthetic taste, religious belief ; we shall have reason to suspect that influences of such character and power are now in operation as shall mould the world hereafter as strikingly as the great intellectual and spiritual re-awakening which belonged to the century that marked the dissolution of the middle ages. In the gradual emancipation of the human being by means of the progress of knowledge and the love of liberty ; in the introduction of new methods of instruction, of production, of action, caused by increasing command over the laws of nature ; in the peculiarity of social taste resulting from a time of intense excitement ; in the new aspect which the human mind is assuming towards authority, political or religious, towards the teaching of the past, the Bible, the Church ; in the dissolution without revolution, which is every where



taking place ; in the stubborn assertion of individuality almost bordering on lawlessness ; above all, in the tendency of the human race through extraordinary means of intercommunication, towards unity<sup>1</sup> in knowledge, in power, in the standard of taste and belief, we see the commencement of a new social world, the nature and form of which we cannot understand, and which we cannot think of without awe. We could wish before our lives closed that we might see a few more leaves of the book of Providence opened ; one scene more in the drama of history acted in our presence.

This cannot be ; but it is surely right to try to form an intelligent appreciation, so far as possible, of our age, for the purpose not merely of gratifying our curiosity, but of learning our duty in the little spheres where we act and move. More especially is this the case with those who undertake the vow of self-consecration to minister in the field of Christian labour. For the changing or changed condition already described affects the Church no less than the world. The Church seems in like manner to be in transition.

<sup>1</sup> The late Prince Consort, than whom few persons, if any, have taken a more intelligent view of the present age, has described this tendency of mankind towards unity, with his usual felicity : “No one who has paid attention to the peculiar features of our era, will doubt that we are living at a period of most wonderful transition, which tends rapidly to accomplish that great end, to which, indeed all history points—the *realization of the unity of mankind*. Not a unity which breaks down the limits and levels the peculiar characteristics of the different nations of the earth, but rather a unity, the *result and product* of those very national varieties and antagonistic qualities.”—*Speeches of the Prince Consort*, p. 110. The whole passage is well worth consulting. The Speech was delivered in connexion with the Exhibition of 1851.

If the Church of the sister isle is on the point of undergoing revolution from without, the Church of our land seems threatened with dissolution from within; if the one is brought, as an endowed institution, face to face with circumstances of difficulty which have had no parallel since the time of the civil war, the other is so weakened by the strife of tongues, by the struggle of party, that the centrifugal force seems in danger of overbalancing the central attraction which hitherto has united the heterogeneous materials in firm cohesion, and has kept the collective mass moving in orderly revolution in the path assigned to it by Providence. We cannot wonder that young men now tremble as they take the irrevocable vow of Orders; we cannot wonder that devout men, staggering at their post of difficulty, well-nigh doubt whether they have not made a life-long mistake in assuming the ministerial office.

Yet I would fain hope that it is possible to offer sure ground of consolation to such anxious spirits. "Say not thou, What is the cause that the former days were better than these? for thou dost not inquire wisely concerning this." I would fain hope that, if we could glance at some of the moral features of the Church or the world of our time, which seem at first sight to offer grounds of discouragement, and were to set off against them the grounds of hopefulness, we might gain consolation. Above all, if we could turn our thoughts to the history of other times of our own Church, or of the Church generally, and see how it lived on through days of pagan persecution, fulfilled its missionary work amid the pagan millions of the ancient world, outlived external



perils arising from dissolving states of society, and internal ones arising from the prevalence of heresy and disunion; how it gradually threw off an unspiritual lethargy, restrained or abolished iniquitous systems of dispensing Church patronage; reformed itself in doctrine, in institutions, in morals; assimilated to itself at different periods new forms of learning, and utilized as its instrument forces which seemed created for its destruction; if, I say, we could watch the march of Providence, making the weak things of this world to confound the strong, we should well-nigh smile at our own alarms, and should not only justify the ways of God to man, but feel that the former times were indeed not better than these. Instead of being discouraged, we should thank God for the age in which our lot is cast; thank Him that He gives us work to do for Him; thank Him that He honours us by making us soldiers in the struggle for advancing the kingdom of His Son.

It is clear that an investigation of this kind could not be comprehended within the limits of this discourse. My object now is a practical one, viz. to gain instruction from the circumstances of our time, and to use the very difficulties by which we are surrounded, as the mode of learning our personal duty, and stimulating ourselves to the performance of it. I shall therefore select only one of these difficulties for a brief notice, in order to derive a ground of consolation from it, before passing to some plain hints for practical conduct. The difficulty shall be drawn from the Church, viz. from the divided state of opinion, the party spirit existing among the Clergy. Let us venture to look this matter in the face.

What circumstance can seem at first sight more discouraging than the fact, that three broadly-marked intellectual and ecclesiastical tendencies, three parties (we are compelled to use this obnoxious term) divide our Church ; indeed, divide it so widely, that the laity have no guarantee that in three adjacent churches they will hear the same doctrine, or even worship according to the same ritual ? There is one party composed of those who take their stand on the Bible and the Reformation ; who ignore the teaching of the early Church, of history, the Catholic utterance of united Christendom. Instead of regarding it as their pride to be followers of the early Churchmen, they are followers of Calvin or some other one-sided thinker in some modern age of the Church. There are others (a second party) who think it as hopeless to expect to find truth in the Bible without taking the utterance of the early Church to guide them in the search for it, as it would be to try to discover a system of Astronomy in the stars of the sky without taking the theories of Galileo and of Newton to suggest the track of their inquiry. Yet in clinging to that ancient teaching, they, too, are not unfrequently led to a one-sided statement of doctrine which, while it supplements the defects of the former party, may be thought to run the risk of obscuring the great central truths which gave to the first-named kind of teaching its power. Others again of our Clergy (a third party), and especially those whose learning brings them into contact with the startling discoveries of modern science, physical, linguistic, historical, critical, are in danger, in their eager wish to find a home in Christianity for things new as well as old, of depreciating or throwing into the background

doctrinal truth, of substituting ethics for Christian dogma, and sometimes well-nigh teaching a Bible without inspiration; occasionally a religion without miracle, and frequently Sacraments without mystical efficacy.

Yet let us look at these three parties under another aspect; let us fix our thoughts on what they hold, not on what they deny; let us look at their better side, not at their worse; and we shall perhaps see that each contributes its element of truth to the Church of our time; we shall see that the Church could not afford to spare any one of them. Above all, if we notice how they have each grown, we shall feel that their existence is not a fortuitous chance; that they are the external embodiment and utterance of principles which Providence is, through the agency of party, teaching to the world; that each of them marks a phase in the history of the life of our Church, through which we may well hope that truth is gradually arising, and out of which we may well hope that the Church of the future will retain the good and eliminate the evil.

I. Look, for instance, at the first of these parties. It is a blessed thing to hear the great central truths of Christianity, the work of the Atoner and the work of the Sanctifier in human salvation, set clearly forth, as is generally done by members of this party; but we may have felt chilled to hear, as sometimes happens, these truths divorced from their true position in the Christian scheme, and overlaid with errors which arose at the time of the Reformation—to find the Sacraments little appreciated or put out of view, the corporate and mystical union of Christ with His members by means of the



sacraments ignored—to hear the work of God in human salvation so emphasized, that man's own share in working out his own salvation by means of penitence, and prayer, and watchfulness, seems in danger of being forgotten—to hear Christ's righteousness "imputed," made the substitute for Christ's righteousness imparted and infused. Yet look at the history of this theological party, and then look at the great central truth which it holds, and we shall see that it is the very earnestness in enforcing this truth which has been the cause of the one-sidedness described, and that it is this truth which has given to its adherents their unspeakable usefulness; for it is to them that we owe, under God, the rescue of the Church from the irreligious torpor of the last century.

Church feeling (we fear that we might almost say, piety) had retired from the Church at the beginning of the century by the secession of the Non-jurors. The fine reasoning spirit of the Latitudinarian divines of the preceding age still indeed survived, and in the early part of the century produced a few great works of rational defence against the shrewd Deist writers of the time; and occasionally it was animated with something like fervour in a Butler or a Secker. But when such as these died, they left no successors, and a torpid spirit benumbed the religious life of the Church. Now, what were the instruments, under God, which aroused the Church out of this lethargy? I answer, the dissemination of earnest personal religion through the labours of those who were called "Gospel-preachers;" the Methodists outside the Church, and those called Evangelical within it. These earnest preachers told men no longer merely of virtue, but of Christ; they brought men to feel that

they inherit a corrupt nature and are deeply sinful in God's sight; they set forth the atonement of Christ as the ground of pardon from sin, and the grace of the Holy Spirit as the means to change unholy men into holy ones. And now, if these truths seem old to us; if they are commonly preached in every pulpit (though which of us dare say, as in the sight of God, that we even yet preach them as pointedly and as simply as we ought), we owe it to the preaching or the writing of clergymen like Simeon, and of laymen like Wilberforce. We pause not to speak of their great social victory as well as their religious (the world owes mainly to them the emancipation of our slaves), nor of their apostolic missions and missionary martyrs. We are wishing now only to bring forward their spiritual influence at home. They were the means of unmasking the practical Pelagianism of their time. They preached the Gospel, the good news of salvation, in the best sense; they unveiled Christ to man; they unveiled man to himself; they taught a sinner how he might find a Saviour. And if it now be thought that we find in their successors too much of the spirit of a mere party—if we often feel hurt (and what clergyman of middle life has not felt hurt?) by the attitude of isolation, of alienation from their brother clergy, shown by them—if it be thought that they sometimes manifest (may we state the plain fact without offence?) an unbrotherlike and separatist spirit; yet let us not forget that they have supplied, nay, that they do supply, an element which we cannot spare,—the knowledge of the direct communion of God with the human soul? What possible element of danger for the future of the Church can exist



merely in their party spirit, their attitude of isolation, compared with the elements of vast spiritual usefulness which they supply, or rather which God through them supplies to us?

II. Look again at the second of those tendencies above named, which first expressed itself a generation ago in the poetry of the saintly Keble, and in the other literature through which earnest men were then feeling their way back to those Church-like truths, which had formed the glory of the best days of the reformed Church of England (the seventeenth century), but had been driven into obscurity by the Pelagianism and Erastianism of the last age. Shall we not feel that we are large debtors to thinkers of this school? Shall we not regard them as instruments in the hands of Providence, of teaching a second great lesson to our age, viz;—that there is a Church as well as a Gospel? For it is to them that we owe the resuscitation of the idea of Christian worship. Not only is the effect of this idea visible externally in the renovation of our Churches, the improvement of services, the introduction of decorum, not to say devotion, the encouragement of the instinct of taste as a means to devotion; but our very theory of religion has been improved. Doctrines forgotten have been revived. We have learned that Christian worship is not merely the assembling for the purpose of hearing sermons, but the collective offering of the faithful to their heavenly Father, by common prayer, by common listening to instruction, by common offering of their souls and bodies in and through the Holy Eucharist—the sacrifice of prayer of the Church visible, in union with the praises of the Church invisible, rising up, incensed with the Saviour's intercession, a

memorial acceptable to the Father. When we track the long controversy which has marked the movement that we describe, we see, amid the wreck of hopes, a few great truths emerging to view, like islands appearing after a tempest. To name no other, we have learned, for example, to set a higher value on Christ's blessed Sacrament of the Holy Communion. Though danger to our reformed Faith has been justly thought to arise from unguarded statements on this subject, yet we have at least thrown off the semi-sceptical view which an English Bishop<sup>2</sup> once put forward in his "Plain Account of the Sacrament." We have learned to feel that, though Christ is not present corporeally, nor even in the elements objectively, yet He is really present in an ineffable and miraculous manner by means of the Holy Ghost to the soul; so that whatever be the other means of access which God has opened for us, the Holy Communion is the chiefest through which and in which He deigns to commune with the human soul, in a manner which is not possible in the same degree at any other time or by any other means. The resuscitation of truths such as these is surely no light blessing.

We must lament indeed that these truths have been, as we think, intermixed with error. We must regret that the sympathy with the older forms of thought that preceded the Reformation, has led to an approval of the whole system of Catholicity—of its faults as well as its excellences; that the union of heart which extends its sympathy to the other great communions of the Western and Eastern world has led some to undervalue the special attitude—reformed while it is Catho-

<sup>2</sup> Bp. Hoadly: "A Plain Account of the Nature and End of the Sacrament of the Lord's Supper." *about 1710*

lic—assumed by our Church; that an amount of ritual and symbolism, unsanctioned by our Church, and unsuited, as many think, to the Teutonic races, has been introduced; that the impetuous haste of partisanship has created what has been lately called<sup>3</sup> a “schismatic” spirit—a spirit of wilfulness, of rebellion against the godly monitions of those who are over us in the Lord, and to whom the clergy have solemnly pledged obedience. But when we have made allowance for these faults (and I am very far from wishing to deny them), is there not a clear gain of divine truth? When we have thrown out of computation the injurious influence of extreme minds who in wilfulness, either of thought or action, mar the good work, does there not remain in the minds of the great body of the clergy, and in the great mass of the laity, a reverent belief in worship, a godly love of the means of grace, unknown before this movement rose? Must we not feel that, if the movement which was first described has laid bare to the soul its own sinfulness and the fulness of Christ’s salvation and the freeness of access to Him, this has superadded the other side of divine truth, and has pointed to the earthly wells of salvation, the sources through which ordinarily Christ offers the water of life to the thirsty soul? If the one has revived the teaching of St. Paul in the Epistle to the Romans, the other has made us understand the mystical tone of the Epistles of his imprisonment. If the one is a reproduction of Augustine or of Anselm, the other makes us sharers in the thoughts of Cyprian, of Chrysostom, and of Leo.

III. But Providence is the teacher of mankind, not

<sup>3</sup> By the Rev. Dr. Salmon in “Principles at Stake.”



only by revealing itself in the ancient Scriptures, but by unfolding its ways in the progress of history and in the growth of knowledge. A kind of natural revelation is going on continually, "the invisible things being understood by the things that are made." Truth, to be complete, must look not only to the past, but to the present. A Church which would have perfect truth, must not only cling to the teaching of the Reformation, or to that of the early centuries, but must find a home for the discoveries of the present—must be in an attitude to welcome the discoveries of the future—must listen not only to tradition, but must listen also to reason, to conscience, to science. When, accordingly, we find in our Church a third movement, which strives to effect this object, is it necessary at once to suspect it as an agent of the evil one, to regard it as latent scepticism in the minds of the clergy? Or can we not here also find consolation in circumstances which at first appear discouraging? Shall we not here too be able to feel that such a line of inquiry has suggested, or is suggesting, another important view of truth which we cannot spare; nay, which we may thank Providence that we are permitted to learn? I venture to think that assuredly we may. The very distrust of dogma, put forward by the friends of this movement, though often unnecessarily extreme, even contains a ground of truth. Men feel that there is danger, lest, while preaching the Gospel and the Church, we allow hard words and neatly rounded systems of doctrinal theology to be the substitute for a personal apprehension of truth—lest we present truth in a dry scholastic manner, draped in the forms of the past, unsuited to common life, having no relation to the

present—lest when children ask for bread, we give them a stone. In preaching faith or feeling, there is danger of forgetting works; in preaching an external religion of rites, there is danger of letting internal piety drop out of sight.

2 We can freely allow that in attempting to remedy defects like these, too much has been surrendered to criticism. Yet something has been gained from the teaching of those who feel the distrust, if we have been led to see that a doctrine must be appropriated and felt to be a living truth, if it is to affect our life. Something has been gained, if we have been led to feel that the God of the Bible, the God of Christianity, is a living God—the God of living doctrines, not of dead dogmas; that the Christ of the Gospels is the example as well as the propitiation, the person as well as the idea, the Saviour that communes with us in our homes as well as at the altar, and meets us in the providence of life as well as in the litanies of the sanctuary. Something has been gained, if we have been made to understand that Christian truth will not suffer by investigation—that we need not in a moment of theological panic deny the exercise of reason, but trust hopefully that reason, which leads us to truth in science, will not fail, if rightly directed, to lead us to truth also in theology.

Here, too, as in the former cases, we are not unmindful of the existence of real danger. We may be distressed by the sight here and there of heresy, of disorganization. We may now and then see some refractory prelate, a Paul of Samosata of the nineteenth century, whose teaching we may deem to be wholly out of harmony with the principles of our Church, and we fear we must add, of our common Christianity.



We may be alarmed by the concessions made and by some supposed to be necessary, in order to harmonize the Hebrew Scriptures with science, or the Christian doctrines with the moral conscience. Yet amid these dangers we gain something from the very attitude assumed in the investigation—from the conviction shown by those who pursue it, that faith must be founded on evidence, that reason, which excites difficulties, will also allay them. Nay, we obtain new aspects of truth also from the critical sagacity, from the freshness of spirit manifested in the very investigation. To take an instance: what intellectual and candid mind can have read the remarkable analysis of our Lord's earthly character and mission which was presented to us about two years ago in the "*Ecce Homo*" (much as he might be chilled by the merely partial results to which the author arrived), without gaining a nobler view of our blessed Lord's earthly mission from the exquisite freshness and originality of the writer's views? Methought, as I pondered on that book, I saw the portrait of the God-man Jesus. I was bidden to look for the man. *Ecce Homo*. I found the God. *Ecce Deus*. The glory of God appeared in the face of Jesus Christ; and in the features of that picture I saw the divine signs of the fatherhood of God and the brotherhood of man<sup>4</sup>.

<sup>4</sup> It is to be hoped that the interesting author will not be prevented by the unhandsome betrayal of the *incognito* from completing his work. It is singular that the attacks made upon his book all turned upon the impossibility of deducing logically the Deity of Christ from his point of view of the humanity. To me it seemed that the step was necessary; but that the doctrine known technically as the personality of the Spirit would never be derived from the "enthusiasm of humanity."

Thus in this tendency of the Church-life of our time, amid much that may be evil, we hail gladly what is good. The evil, we hope, is temporary, accidental: the good is a treasure for ever. And from the view of this, as of the former tendencies, we take courage. We recognize in each of them God's plan of working out a great principle by means of a party; we regard each as an instrument in the hands of Providence in teaching one side of truth to our age. We mark in their history one instance of the great law by which God is seen to unveil truth to the world. A man or a party sees a half truth, and pursues it to its extreme, pushing it so far that it verges upon error. The rival theory is next seen and pushed to its consequences by others. Truth is many-sided. The truths thus separated in one age are in the next combined into a higher unity<sup>5</sup>. The truth held by each age or taught by each person, is not unmixed truth, but a combination of truth with some element of error; the true element is retained, the error is rectified, by the age which succeeds. Truth, therefore, in the way by which man attains it, is a residuum which remains after ideas have been submitted to the criticism of successive generations.

If accordingly we are right in assuming that in these various views of religious truth there is a substantial reality, logical and doctrinal, we have no need to be discouraged and look back with fond

<sup>5</sup> It will be observed that this principle is in part Hegel's. The *philosophy* of this thinker is mainly obsolete, as being founded on the assumption of the identity of the laws of thought and the laws of things; but his *method* will hardly be allowed to drop out of the world's memory. It is the parent of "the historic method of inquiry."

regret on a time a generation ago, when thought was at rest, and the waters of strife were calm, and there was not the ferment of the present time. "Say not, then, what is the cause that the former days were better than these? for thou dost not inquire wisely concerning this." For we have seen that each of these movements is a feeling after truth, a stage in the history of our Church and nation, which we believe will, under the good Providence of God, leave its mark of good after the evil has passed. We are not justifying human error, but attempting to justify God's ways to man in adopting this mode of educating the world through a mixture of error with truth, and enabling it to retain or regain the truth in spite of the error. The transition in the development of truth is a moment of solemn responsibility, of serious interest, but we need not be fainthearted in passing through it. We may rely hopefully upon the result; and meantime, instead of looking suspiciously on our brother clergy who may not see eye to eye with us, we may offer to them the right hand of Christian fellowship. They are our fellow-soldiers in the struggle of truth against error, they are doing their part, battling around their respective banners in the great army of Christ's Church. We may cherish our own piety by exercising the loving sympathy which regards them as unconscious instruments in working out great moral results for the world.

If such be the character of the age and of the Church in the present time, let us ask, what are the requisites especially necessary to qualify the



clergy for moral usefulness in such a time. This was the practical question which I had originally in view.

Three requisites may be enumerated:—*knowledge, wisdom, goodness.*

1. We require *knowledge* in the clergy. It is a common assertion that the clergy are not the educated body which they once were. I believe this statement to be a mistake. There has never been a period in English history, nay, I will go further, there has never been a period in the history of Christendom, when the clergy as a body have been so highly educated (if by “education” we understand general as well as professional culture), as the English clergy are at this moment. But while this is true, if they are viewed relatively to their predecessors, it is also observable (and this is probably the circumstance which has given rise to the mistake) that, if viewed relatively to the present age, the clergy do not hold the same pre-eminence in learning over the laity which they held in former ages—a circumstance which is not caused by the fact that the clergy know less, but that the laity know more; the standard of education being, thank God, very much raised throughout the country generally. Similarly, the attack frequently made on the clergy as dull preachers, arises, not from the fact that sermons of the present day are worse than those of our predecessors (any one may convince himself of this fact by comparing an average sermon of this age with the printed discourses of a former age); but it arises partly from the increased thirst for spiritual life in the people, who will not be put off with a dull meaningless homily read before them,

but want something spoken from the heart to the heart (the age is real and cannot have its time wasted with shams); and partly from the fact that our sermons seem feeble to those who are daily accustomed to read in novels or in the leading articles of the newspaper press the ablest writing of the age. The same mental strength and force are demanded from ordinary preachers which are found in the secular authors whose writings are the boast of our generation. If I speak thus, however, it is only from a sense of justice, not with the view of expressing contentment with the state either of clerical knowledge or of preaching. Much needs to be done at our Universities and Theological Colleges to give a more systematic training as a special preparation for holy orders and especially a general training in those modern branches, such as some of the physical sciences and the comparative study of language, which, in so many ways, by their discoveries or by their inductive method of investigation, intersect the path of theological teaching or the evidence of theological truth.

Much, however, needs to be done by the clergy themselves in their own homes. Nothing would so inculcate moderation, nothing would so break down the spirit of party or give men a loving and forbearing respect for those who think differently from themselves, as a larger study of the grounds of their opponents' position and a reconsideration of their own. Learning, in expelling bigotry, will not produce a spirit of latitude, a spirit of indifference; but it will assuredly produce a spirit of tolerance, of modesty, of inquiry, of fraternal charity. A truly learned man is in heart always humble, always



willing to learn from others, always willing to make allowance for others. It is the ignorant man who is a bigot. Bigotry more generally arises from a narrow mind than from a bad heart.

Nothing also would so help a clergyman in his pastoral work as time regularly devoted to study. It is not merely that his mind thus becomes filled with the kind of information which may furnish to him valuable material for his professional work (and he is not fit to teach if he has ceased to learn); but his own mind will be braced and kept healthy. If we would gain a large and ever fresh view of God's dealing with man in revelation and in history—if we would live above the petty agitations of the day, and reduce events and ideas to their true perspective, if we would guard ourselves from wandering after the *ignis fatuus* of our own fancies, we must keep our minds in communion with the great writers, secular and religious, of this and other ages. The time spent by a clergyman in communion with the world of mind is not time lost (never let us allow the utilitarian spirit of the day to make us think so); it is in some respects second only in importance to that spent in communion with the Father of spirits in prayer. It may diminish the quantity of a man's pastoral ministrations, but it will improve their quality. I would therefore urge those who are taking holy orders, not merely to study the Sacred Scriptures by means of every rational aid obtainable (this of course I presuppose, because therein, above all other sources, they will learn the mind of the Spirit), but to make themselves thoroughly masters of one or two standard works on Church history, on

doctrinal theology<sup>6</sup>, and on the Christian evidences; and, if possible, of one or more important treatises of the great Fathers, Chrysostom and Augustine<sup>7</sup>, and of our own grand school of divines of the Caroline period, such as Jackson, Hall, Hammond, Sanderson. And when I urge a thorough acquaintance with these subjects, I assume that they shall not be read with the haste with which books are too often read for an ordination examination, but thoughtfully and patiently during many months, or perhaps years. Also I would especially urge the clergy to keep their minds constantly active by means of the regular reading of some standard work of secular knowledge, of history, science, or literature. In a diocese like that of Peterborough, mainly rural, time for study may in most parishes be secured. The experience of a busy life convinces me that there are few positions where a few hours for daily study may not be secured, if proper care be taken to seize the morning hours before we are hopelessly involved in the web which daily personal engagements weave around us.

2. But we need the gift of *wisdom* in the clergy as well as knowledge. We do not want literary pedants; we want men of good sense, who possess judgments improved by training, judgments guided by conscience

<sup>6</sup> I wish to call the attention of English students to two American works: Schaff's *Church History*, and Shedd's *History of Doctrine*. The latter is a work of remarkable value, especially in its sketch of the theology of Athanasius, Augustine, and Anselm.

<sup>7</sup> Perhaps the following treatises may be suggested:—Chrysostom on the *Priesthood*, and *Homilies on St. Matthew*. Augustine's *Confessions*, *City of God*, treatise on the *Trinity*, and some of his Anti-Pelagian treatises.

and honour. If learning be necessary to fit the clergy for their work in such an age as ours, wisdom above all is needed to direct them in carrying out their work judiciously. If it be true, as some allege, that our Articles and Formularies are found to be so vague that it is no longer possible to use them as a means for restraining erroneous teaching; if it be at least true that Articles are rendered less definite by the relaxation in 1865 of the terms of clerical subscription; if the power of law and of bishops is unable to restrain individual clergy from having each a psalm or a doctrine, or from introducing changes which irritate the laity,—then it is clear that our Church is more than ever ceasing to be the church of law; but it ought also, on this account, more and more to become the church of honour. The principle of chivalry becomes more than ever that to which we must look as our protection. If we cease to be restrained by law, we must see that we make moral honour an effectual substitute. If we are thrown for guidance more than formerly on our individual judgment, we are more than ever under obligation to try to exercise our judgment in soberness, as occupiers, not owners. If, for example, we are thrown upon our own responsibility in reference to any changes which we think to be desirable in the ritual of our churches, what a motive is this to caution and tenderness! How ought we to search our hearts as to the singleness of our motives, and also to weigh expedience as well as our own wishes! We ought to hesitate long before we take steps which might alienate persons from the Church (the Church has not so many friends that she can afford to lose even a few of them), and we ought also to remember that we are trustees for the



honour, and, in some degree, for the interests, of our brother clergy. How cautious we ought to be not to swerve from a loyal love to the English Church and sympathy with its reformed and moderate teaching; how cautious not to mistake our own self-will for conscience; how cautious not to increase the difficulties of our brethren, or to disobey our ordination promises! how important, in a word, to remember, that it is a Christian duty not to forget to act as gentlemen! The Greek moralist of old classed the virtues which belong to the intercourse of social life among the moral virtues, for he felt that good taste in behaviour depends on right intention in heart; and St. Paul has described one of the characteristics of Christian love to be, that "it is not puffed up, doth not behave itself unseemly, seeketh not her own, is not easily provoked." Wisdom is given to some by nature; but all may acquire it if they remember that the great impediment to it is the want of the self-control which brings the feelings under the guidance of the judgment. Of this defect religion is in a great degree the remedy. The holiness created by prayer is the best safeguard for wise conduct.

3. How much, in addition to knowledge and wisdom, do we require *holiness*; for Christianity is not merely a system but a life, and therefore Christian teaching presupposes personal experience on the part of the teacher. His office is not vicariously to perform a function (it is this, but it is much more than this), not to teach a science of belief, but a rule of life. The secret of usefulness is holiness. The divine life must be kindled in our own souls and exemplified in our own lives, if we would instruct others in the mode of its attainment. If we are to spread Chris-

tianity by our personal action, as redeemed men arousing in others the heart-stirring convictions that are struggling like a pent-up fire in our own souls, and teaching them how they may find pardon and become changed from the love of sin to the love of God, it is necessary that we possess the heaven-kindled fire of love to God, and that we watch that it grow not dim. The solemn words which ask us whether we are "moved by the Holy Ghost," imply at least these two things: first, that we feel religion to be real, and, secondly, that we have an earnest wish to stir up the souls of men for God, and to lead them to the Saviour whom we ourselves have found. They presuppose that some struggle of heart shall have gone on between our souls and our Saviour; that we must have known what it is to find Christ and be found of Him. If we feel our own lack in this respect, let us ask of God to supply it, and let us use our own best endeavours to attain to holiness by means of a fixed habit of private prayer, and by the frequent reception of the blessed Sacrament. Perhaps it may not be undesirable to suggest, that we should probably also derive great help from the habitual reading of the memoirs of devout men, such as the heroic missionary, Henry Martyn; or of pastoral manuals, like the precious volume, *The Bishopric of Souls*, of the late lamented Archdeacon Evans; that, from the examples and teaching of men like these, whose souls are now with God, we may not only receive assistance in the divine life ourselves, but attain to a knowledge of the perplexities of the human heart, which may fit us to act even beyond our years, as spiritual directors of the conscience<sup>8</sup>.

<sup>8</sup> It is right to mention also the work of a living writer: Dean Goulburn's *Thoughts on Personal Religion*.



Therefore, as we take our vows this day, let us not enter on our clerical course discouraged by the difficulties of our times, or by our own unfitness. Let us see our needs—knowledge, wisdom, holiness—and strive to supply them. We may feel our own feebleness. So much the more strong is the ground of hope; for in God we may find strength. He requires not worthiness; He only asks for willingness. Give your souls, your lives, your all to Him. The offering to His service of an educated mind and a pious heart will be accepted by Him. Take your Orders as from Him. Ask and expect to receive this day from the great Head of the Church, through the laying on of hands and the covenant seal of the Holy Communion, the grace which shall make you temples of the Holy Ghost, and cause you to be, as it were, a hallowed, sacramental presence as you move about in your parishes. Faint not, if, as life glides on, the apparent inutility of your labours discourages you. The age seems past when great effects are to result from the exertions of individual men; yet each individual contributes his portion to the combined result. You may not live to see the harvest time; nay, Providence may perhaps see fit not to gladden you even by the sight of the young blade peeping above the soil from the seed of truth which you have scattered; but most assuredly the harvest will come, and the angels shall one day gather into the garner of our Lord the ripe sheaves which will spring up from the seed sown in weakness by your hands. You may never know it; you may live discouraged; you may die neglected, falling like the unknown soldier who perishes early in the battle before the day's victory is assured; “the stream of your life may suddenly disappear, engulfed in some

secret channel which conveys it to the great ocean of eternity." Providence may lay you aside; but your mission will have been fulfilled. One of the holiest of men once said, "If, by the labour of a whole life, I could cause one sin less to be committed against the Divine Majesty, I should feel that I had not lived in vain." So we—if in the humblest sphere we have added even a little to the stock of human improvement; if we have been the means of exciting one holy thought or educating one mind in knowledge and piety—may be sure that our lives will not have been spent in vain. The dead rest from their labours, but their works do follow them.

Instead of false regrets that the former days were better than these, let us bless God heartily for the age in which we live; bless Him that there is a field of labour, of difficulty for us. God be thanked that He honours us with a post of danger; that the victory is not yet won, the battle not yet ended, the roll of heroes not yet full. In the strength of God let us take our place in the struggle. There is every where, at our very doors, ground untilled for God. Let us resolve to cultivate it. Let us labour on in hope without fainting; nor rest except as a means to further work. Life is short enough in which to labour. Rest will come soon enough to the weary workman. The week of life will soon end, and the careworn labourer receive the glad dismissal to his sabbath of eternal repose: "Go thou thy way till the end, for thou shalt rest, and stand in thy lot at the end of the days." Then "they that be wise shall shine as the brightness of the firmament, and they that turn many to righteousness as the stars for ever and ever."





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